

## A villa where the entrance to the Gusen camp once stood

What follows is an incredible sequence of pictures that show the transformation of the entrance to the Gusen I sub-camp, where ten of thousands of people died, into a lavish private villa.



This is possibly the oldest known picture of the Gusen I sub-camp entrance building, probably taken in spring 1943. This building housed the commandant's office, and the camp administration office.

In its cellars was the "Bunker", the camp prison. Each day, with systematic cruelty, prisoners of every nationality would be tortured and killed in those cells.

The large gate visible in the picture was the main entrance to the sub-camp: all the prisoners sent to Gusen I entered through this gate.

Taken shortly after the war, this picture shows the entrance to the sub-camp fundamentally unchanged from wartime.

The large printed sign indicates the name of a company involved in granite work, the same stone that was extracted from the nearby quarry in which thousands of prisoners had died from hunger and maltreatment.



A picture taken some years later: the building has now been partially reconstructed. The walls have a new facing, and there is a car, possibly of the building's new owners, parked next to what had been the camp entrance.

The sign indicating the presence of the stone-works company has been removed: the entire area is slowly being transformed into a very pleasant residential zone.

The transformation continues into the 1960s. The electric cable that had crossed the land to the back of the house has been removed, and the wooden pole that had held the cable up would soon be removed as well.

On the left of the picture – supplied by camp survivor Angelo Ratti – you can still see one of the wooden barracks that had been immediately outside the camp, and that had served as housing for the camp guards.



And now we arrive in more modern times: the camp entrance building has become a villa in the “grand style”. Here and there you can still see the remains of a warehouse, but the major work of transformation has been completed. Arches and terraces have been added to the two sides of the building.

The central passageway has now been closed off and replaced with a large window, and you can almost see the well-lit interior. Fresh soil has been placed at the sides of the main entrance to allow plants and flowers to grow. In the “Bunker”, the cellar, maybe the new owners are storing wine or beer, who knows?

A final picture, taken in May 2013 by Leonardo Visco Gilardi. The attempt to conceal the pain and suffering of the site is near completion.

But history cannot be cancelled or written over with a layer of fresh lime and some flowers.



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